



THE ON GUARD

Volume 35, Issue 5

May 2006

Newspaper of the National Guard

Medics
help
villagers

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"We come down here with a caring attitude, providing services that their government is financially unable to. It all really helps to foster a good picture of the U.S. military."

– Lt. Col. Stanley Jones

Lt. Gen. James: Outgoing ANG director credits Guard members for success

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, Md. - Lt. Gen. Daniel James III stepped closer to retirement March 28, saying farewell to members of the Air National Guard in a short speech focused almost entirely on them and barely on himself.

"You're very special people," the outgoing director of the Air National Guard said, touching on Air Guard efforts after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. "They just don't make them like you every day."

James got a standing ovation from the hundreds of Airmen gathered in Hanger 8, his eyes moistening at the conclusion of his remarks. He will retire at the end of June. The next Air National Guard director had not been appointed at press time.

James's wife Dana and son Daniel were among those who gathered for the farewell ceremony. Recognizing the director's tireless, seemingly continuous travel obligations to fulfill duties around the world, officers gave him a certificate for a recliner. They also said it seemed unlikely that the director would use it very much, even in retirement, because of his hard-charging personality.

James is the 11th director of the Air National Guard, a position he assumed in



Air National Guard photo

Lt. Gen. Daniel James III credited Airmen for the success of the Air National Guard during his tenure. The director is seen here testifying before the Senate.

James: Page 2

Vital Guardian exercise tests Guard

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON - National Guard units with critical capabilities deployed to the site of a simulated detonation of a nuclear bomb in an American city on April 4.

More than 460 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from nine states and the nation's capital took part in the Vital Guardian Exercise in and around the District of Columbia National Guard Armory, in the shadow of RFK Stadium.

A series of fictional Global News Network broadcasts set the scene for an escalating disaster that began with a morning explosion and debris cloud at the hypothetical

Springfield Football Stadium. A persistent breeze added realism to the scenario and potential danger.

A video from the imaginary United Adversary terrorist group claimed responsibility, and a National Guard civil support team determined the bomb was an improvised nuclear device, with many people feared dead and thousands more injured.

Vital Guardian demonstrated that the National Guard is equipped and trained to respond to virtually every aspect of such a calamity.

Hundreds of members of Congress; federal, state and municipal officials; representa-

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C-17s pass one million flying hours

By Louis A. Arana-Barradas

Air Force News Service

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany - A C-17 Globemaster III on an evacuation mission from Iraq flew the Air Force transport fleet past the one millionth flying hour mark on its return to this airlift hub in March.

There were no bands or dignitaries waiting for the plane - from the Mississippi Air National Guard's 172nd Airlift Wing - when it arrived after a more than 14-hour mission that started late on March 19.

"This was just a regular mission for us," wing commander Col. William Hill said.

The aircraft first delivered 43,000 pounds of cargo to Al Asad, Iraq. Then it flew to



Air Force News Service photo

A Mississippi Air National Guard C-17 heads to Iraq, putting the planes past the one millionth hour of flight time.

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A fine day for a parade – and for New York's 'Fighting 69th' Page 3

About The On Guard

The On Guard is published monthly using federal funds under provisions of AR 360-1 and AFI 35-101 by the Command Information Branch of the National Guard Bureau's Public Affairs Office for all members of the Army and Air National Guard. The 70,000 copies are distributed to all National Guard units and selected organizations throughout the Total Force. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army, the Air Force or the National Guard Bureau.

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The not-so-retiring sergeant major

ARLINGTON, Va. - I have been harboring a secret for nearly 27 years - since July 1978. It's time to come clean. Before he was a sergeant major, when he was still a staff sergeant in the Maine Army National Guard, John J. Leonard Jr. could have forced me out of the National Guard.

At least that's how it seemed on a hot Friday night at the state armory in Augusta, Maine, where the humidity was as thick as Jell-O. I was in the hot seat, accused of a lack of leadership, at the end of my first week as a candidate in the Maine Army National Guard's Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

Staff Sgt Leonard was one of the three NCOs who had two weeks to mold 30 of us into sergeants who could lead other Soldiers to hell and back, or at least be willing to try. I was doing well academically - in the classroom and on the tests - but I was not living up to the standards of leadership expected by the members of the review board that I sat before that evening. John Leonard Jr. was on the board.

I took it very seriously. Had I been dismissed from the academy, I would have been too embarrassed to remain in the Guard. I would have resigned.

To cut to the quick: I survived the board, took on the leadership challenges that came my way, graduated from the academy, and began an enduring friendship with John Leonard Jr. that has lasted for nearly three decades.

I was told, by the way, not to discuss the board's proceedings with anyone. I have kept that counsel until now. This is an appropriate time to break that silence because Command Sgt. Maj. John Leonard Jr. will retire from the Army National Guard, as the first command sergeant major for the National Guard Bureau, on June 26, three months shy of his 60th birthday.

This is also the month of Memorial Day,

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By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
Senior Correspondent

when America pauses to pay tribute to the men and women who have served this country in uniform. Yes, we remember the many who have died from the wounds of battle and the older veterans who have passed on because of illness and old age.

However, it's also a good time to remember, and thank, the service members who are still with us. And John Leonard Jr. stands tall among the ranks of the living.

He has served America as a Marine and as an Army Guard NCO for nearly 40 years. He wears two Purple Hearts from his days as a young Marine in Vietnam. He went to war again during Operation Desert Storm. He has visited thousands of National Guard soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan during the Global War on Terrorism.

John Leonard Jr. has served as a command sergeant major in Maine and in Washington for 20 years, the remarkable equivalent of a full military career. He has been the senior enlisted Soldier for the Army Guard in Maine and, in Washington, for the entire Army National Guard, for the assistant sec-

retary of defense for Reserve Affairs and for the National Guard Bureau.

While advocating for the enlisted force - frequently with a touch of Downeast humor - he has become as comfortable on Capitol Hill as he is in a Black Hawk.

There are, however, other reasons why this ol' Soldier should be remembered this month.

- He personifies the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. Those values do not define what he does. They define who he is.

- He has never relaxed his personal standards of physical fitness and attention to the details of his soldierly bearing. He is as lean and strong as most Marines 30 years his junior because he runs and lifts weights and does countless pushups. He has a keen and critical eye for wearing the uniform properly, and he lets people know when something is out of order.

- Wherever he is, whatever he is doing, he gives his undivided attention to privates who have problems and senior sergeants who have issues. He promises to resolve the difficulties to the best of his ability. Then he delivers.

- He holds people's feet to the fire with a stern look and quiet word more effectively than anyone else can by ranting and raving. He praises people in public. He counsels them in private.

I can tell you right here and now that I am a better Soldier because Command Sgt. Maj. John Leonard Jr. has been my mentor and, at times, my counselor. I can also tell you that I am not alone.

Those who know him know this: He may be retiring from active duty so he can spend more well-deserved time with his wife Sharon and with his two daughters and his grandchildren, but he is not about to fade away. If we need him, he'll be there.

FROM PAGE 1

James

2002, first African American to hold the post.

"One of the things I didn't want to change was the character of the people," said James, a huge flag hanging behind him.

His father, Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James Jr., was an original member of the Tuskegee Airmen and the first African American to become a four-star general in the active Air Force. The original 992 Tuskegee Airmen never lost an American bomber that they were protecting during World War II.

The son became a command pilot, flying more than 4,000 hours in fighters and trainers, including more than 300 combat missions in Vietnam. His awards include two Distinguished Flying Crosses. A Texas Air Guard 149th Fighter

Wing F-16 with James's name on the side was on display during the March 28 director's call.

James served as operations group commander for the 149th

"You're very special people. They just don't make them like you every day."

—Lt. Gen. Daniel James

in Texas before he became that state's adjutant general, a position he held more than six years.

James's tenure as director has been marked by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and he compared their impact to that of the Kennedy assassination two generations earlier. "For the rest of your lives you'll always remember where you were and what

happened," he told the Airmen.

He emphasized the Air National Guard's role in securing the nation's skies immediately after the attacks and helping to move 48,000 Guard members to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

"You make it look so effortless," he said. "Thank you all for what you do."

James also acknowledged a debt to his family. "I've been very blessed," he said.

The director formulates, develops and coordinates all policies, plans and programs affecting 106,800 Air National Guard members in more than 88 flying units and 200 geographically separated units throughout the United States and its territories.

"Special people like you can do extraordinary things," James told the Airmen. "You've proved



Photo by Maj. Mark Brian

Lt. Gen. Daniel James talks at a 2004 meeting on the National Guard's transformation -- one of the significant issues during his tenure as director, Air National Guard.

it in the past. You'll prove it again."

Tech. Sgt. Gary Hicks contributed to this report.

A fine day for a parade – and for the 'Fighting 69th'



New York National Guard photo

The New York Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry returns to its New York City armory after leading the annual St. Patrick's Day parade on March 17. It was the 155th year that the "Fighting 69th" served as the lead unit and honor guard for the grand old parade.

By Maj. Les' Melnyk

National Guard Bureau

NEW YORK -- Does marching up Fifth Avenue in New York City at the head of the biggest parade of the year sound like your idea of a pretty good drill weekend? It did to me some 17 years ago when I first joined the Guard, and it still does today.

This year, it was better than ever.

On March 17, for the 155th time in its history, New York's own "Fighting 69th," the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, led the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York, the world's oldest and largest celebration dedicated to the patron saint of Ireland.

This year was the best I've experienced for the simple reason that the 69th was home from Iraq. I left the battalion in

1998, but I still have many friends there. So too, it seemed, did most of New York. The entire city came out to cheer.

Cardinal Egan dedicated Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral to the 19 members of the regiment who were killed in action. Three of the huge video screens that dominate the north end of Times Square were lit up with messages welcoming the 69th back. The 102-year-old armory on Lexington Avenue at 26th Street, a National Historic Landmark, was decked out for a party the likes of which it hadn't seen since 1946 - the last time the 69th returned from a war.

Making the day even more special, about 50 members of Louisiana's 256th Infantry Brigade came up to march and celebrate with the 69th. During its year in Iraq, the 69th had been assigned to the 256th, known as the Tiger Brigade. The 69th gave up a company of infantrymen to

the brigade and gained a company of Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The reorganized battalion was designated Task Force Wolfhound in honor of the regimental mascot, the Irish wolfhound. When Task Force Wolfhound was assigned to secure the airport road outside Baghdad, it was purely coincidental that military maps already labeled it "Route Irish."

The Louisiana contingent consisted mostly of Soldiers from C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry, affectionately known as the "Black Sheep" during their time in Task Force Wolfhound. The Soldiers, plus many members of the brigade staff, paid their own way for a chance to see the big city and be reunited with their wartime comrades.

"It's a vacation for us, and we need one" said Col. Ron Johnson, the wartime deputy commander of the 256th and the brigade's current commander. Hurricane Katrina deprived many in the 256th of the kind of welcome home ceremony they had dreamed about. Here was a chance to make up for it.

The 69th Infantry has served as the St. Patrick's Day parade honor guard since the unit was organized in 1851. Anti-immigrant emotions in that day often turned violent. In fact, another famous New York regiment, the 71st Infantry, was organized at about the same time and adopted the nickname "The American Guard." Their purpose? To keep an eye on the growing immigrant population - especially the Irish.

The traditions are what makes St. Patrick's Day with the 69th so special. Historians thrive on traditions. So do Soldiers. It's a big part of why I keep coming back, even

though I've been out of the battalion for seven years.

Every Soldier wears a sprig of boxwood on his uniform. The boxwood recalls the American Civil War battle of Fredericksburg in 1862, when the 69th went into battle without its distinctive green regimental flag. As the Irish Soldiers moved forward in a doomed assault, they placed boxwood in their caps so that they could still "march under the green." Legend has it that after the battle, the bodies found closest to the Confederate lines had boxwood in their caps.

Officers and senior noncommissioned officers, in tribute to the unit's heritage, carry "fighting sticks" made of Irish blackthorn wood.

The officers convene in the morning in the commander's office amidst the Civil War flags, regimental silver and the Medals of Honor displayed on the wall. They drink a toast to the regiment. Irish whiskey, of course.

When the battalion assembles, Chaplain (Col.) Edward Kane leads the formation accompanied by a single Soldier carrying the chaplain's flag. "We're not actually conducting a church parade" explains Father Kane before we step off. The U.S. Army doesn't hold church parades anymore. "We're conducting a reenactment of a church parade, commemorating when the 69th defended the old cathedral down on Mott Street from an anti-Irish mob." History dies hard in the Fighting 69th. All these traditions, and it isn't even 7 a.m. yet.

We marched from the armory on 26th Street to St. Patrick's Cathedral. New York's finest cleared the way up Madison Avenue on their motorcycles, and the Soldiers shouted jodies that echoed off the surrounding skyscrapers. Bleary-eyed New Yorkers gazed on in barely concealed astonishment. Many shouted words of encouragement.

Outside the cathedral I visited briefly with Maj. Michael Kazmierzak. He was the commander of the Louisiana "Black Sheep" Company in Iraq. I had met him once before, a year ago at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The 69th Veteran's Corps had contacted me and asked me to look in on him since I now live in the District of Columbia. It didn't matter that he was a Louisianan attached to the 69th. He had served with the regiment. Therefore, he was part of the regiment. The veterans wanted to know if he needed any financial help. They had been raising money for the wounded - and for the families of those killed.

Kazmierzak's legs had been badly chewed up by an IED, and he spent months in recovery. He looked great now, and I didn't notice a limp as he marched. The day held many celebrations, large and small.

The 69th had reserved seats - the best seats in the house - as the Soldiers marched into St. Patrick's Cathedral for morning Mass. We were led, as always, by the regimental piper playing "Garryowen" - a song the 69th has called its own since long before Custer and the 7th Cavalry ever heard the tune. If I heard that song once on St. Patrick's Day, I heard it a hundred times.

All 3,000 seats were full, and the people gave the Soldiers a standing ovation as they marched in. Near me in the ranks were several Louisianans.

"This is amazing," muttered one sergeant major as the warm, bright expanse of the cathedral opened up before us. "It's like we're in Europe," said a colonel. "No, even better," I thought to myself. "We're in New York."

After Mass, the regiment formed up and marched down to the start of the parade. We were joined by the 69th Veterans Corps, which marches immediately behind the active battalion. Two humongous Irish wolfhounds greeted us there, both so gentle that even my little girl, who is afraid of dogs, laughed as she ran up to pet each one. It is the Irish wolfhound's nature that the Fighting 69th took for its motto and so ably personified in Iraq: "Gentle when Stroked - Fierce when Provoked."

Not one, not two, but three bands lined up to march with the 69th, and each of them played "Garryowen" - repeatedly. If you didn't love that tune, you were in for a long day.



New York National Guard photo

Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, adjutant general for the New York National Guard, attaches the Iraq streamer to the 42nd Infantry Division flag as part of the St. Patrick's Day celebration. The 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry earned that streamer for the division during its tour in Iraq.

Earth Day 2006: National Guard plants trees



Marian Livesay (left) prepares to plant a tree at a parking lot near the Air National Guard Readiness Center on April 7. Several plants and trees were planted in observance of Earth Day near the center at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. Livesay is a readiness reporting program manager at the center. Master Sgt. William Finch (right) gets ready to plant another tree. He is the civil engineering fire protection manager at the center. (Photos by Bobby Jones, Capital Flyer)



Body armor: Army bans commercial products

Army News Service

WASHINGTON - Soldiers may no longer wear body armor other than Army-issued Interceptor Body Armor (IBA), Army officials have announced.

In a safety message sent to all commanders March 17, the Army warned that commercial body armor may cause death or serious injury to Soldiers.

"I think the mothers and fathers that are currently having Soldiers deployed, whether they're female or male, ought to feel comfortable with the fact ... that we have provided the best body armor that is available anywhere in the world," said Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Sorenson, the Army secretary's

deputy assistant for acquisition and systems management, at a Pentagon news conference March 31.

Of main concern with officials is "Dragon Skin," produced by Pinnacle Armor. While the manufacturer has received close to a million dollars from the Army to produce lighter-weight armor, Dragon Skin's capabilities do not yet meet Army requirements and is not certified by the Army to protect against several small arms threats currently being encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Advertising for Dragon Skin implies that it is superior to IBA, but Army officials say there have been no tests to validate the claim.

"They have not been tested. They have not

passed the rigor that we put into standards determining whether something is safe, effective and suitable," Sorenson said. "And until they can do that, we will not give them, if you will, the 'Good Housekeeping seal of approval.'"

Many Soldiers interviewed by Stars and Stripes said they were fine with the Army's move to ban privately purchased body armor.

"It's been proven to work, so why should I go out and have to buy my own?" Sgt. Davaras Bronson of the 3rd Corps Support Command told a reporter.

Body armor currently being issued to Soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan has gone through seven improvements since the

beginning of the war, according to Sorenson. More than 200,000 sets of the latest iteration are now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Commanders have 30 days to ensure their Soldiers are in compliance with the directive. Additionally, commanders may tailor the IBA configuration to meet threat and mission requirements. Components include the outer tactical vest and ballistic plates, throat protector, collar, groin protector, Deltoid and Auxiliary Protector, side plates and side plate carriers.

Soldiers may dispose of unauthorized body armor through their local Central Issue Facility, which will ship the items to PEO Soldier.

FROM PAGE 1

Globemaster

Balad to pick up 16 patients, including some critically wounded. It was the same type of mission four wing aircraft have been flying out of Ramstein since late last year. The turnaround at Balad went like clockwork, the colonel said.

"We were in and out of Balad quickly," he said. "Everything went real well."

On board, the aircrew and aeromedical evacuation team focused on the patients. The team was a mixture of active duty, Guard and Reserve Airmen. There was even a flight lieutenant from the Royal Air Force on board. For them, the mission did not end until the patients were safely aboard ambulances bound for Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, about six miles away.

"It was a good flight. There were no emergencies in flight. Even the one critical care patient did well," said nurse Capt. David Strickland, a Guardsman from the Mississippi Guard's 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. "The C-17 is made for this kind of mission. It's the best plane for the job. It's very 'air evac' friendly."

The captain has been with Ramstein's 791st Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron for 90 days and has flown on 16 missions. Many of those flights return with 25

to 30 patients, most wounded in combat. Last week he was on a mission that lasted 26 hours.

But on this mission, Strickland said, "We didn't have nearly the patient load today we had last week. This was a much shorter flight. We're back early."

The mission went as planned, said aircraft commander Lt. Col. Jim Conway of the Mississippi wing. He said it was a perfect example of the C-17's direct delivery capability. That's when an aircraft picks up cargo on the East Coast of the United States and flies to Ramstein, where a fresh crew can continue the flight, or it can spend the night.

The C-17 arrived nearly fully loaded, he said. It picked up more cargo at Ramstein. Also on board were nearly a dozen members of the media and their escorts. "The flight was pretty routine," he said, "We had a couple of minor changes, but nothing major. All in all, the mission went as planned."

Loadmaster Senior Airman Sarah Zehringer said one reason the mission went without a hitch "is because these aeromedical evacuation folks really know their stuff." The Airman deployed here from the 17th Airlift Squadron at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. She said the working relationship between aircrew and medics is a good one.

"We pretty much try to stay out of their way once they get their patients on board," she said.

Once the aircraft landed and medical teams unloaded the patients, the significance of the flight sunk in for some of the crew. They were well aware they would be on an historic flight. And they had even put a poster in the aircraft that commemorated the flight. Being on the flight was an exciting and humbling experience, Conway said.

Zehringer said being on the historic flight was a privilege. "I represent everybody I fly with," she said. "And being a woman, I get to represent all the women who do this job. And there aren't many of us. So this is pretty cool."

But like most of her crewmates, she said it was more satisfying to accomplish a safe mission. "It's always a relief - and it fills you with pride - to be able to bring home wounded troops," she said. "I just hope they get the care they need so they can be with their families real soon."

The C-17 made its maiden flight on Sept. 15, 1991, and the first production model was delivered to Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., June 14, 1993. The first squadron of C-17s, the 17th Airlift Squadron, was declared operationally ready Jan. 17, 1995.

Tattoos: More lenient Army policy allows hand, neck art

By J.D. Leipold

Army News Service

WASHINGTON - The Army has revised its tattoo policy to bolster recruitment of highly-qualified individuals who might otherwise have been excluded from joining.

Tattoos are now permitted on the hands and back of the neck if they are not extremist, indecent, sexist or racist. Army Regulation 670-1, which was modified in late January, also now specifies: "Any tattoo or brand anywhere on the head or face is prohibited except for permanent make-up."

For women, allowable make-up would be permanent eyeliner, eyebrows and make-up applied to fill in lips, officials said. They said permanent make-up should be conservative and complement the uniform and complexion in both style and color and not be trendy.

Army officials made the change because they realized the number of potential recruits bearing skin art had grown enormously over the years. About 30 percent of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 have tattoos, according to a Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey. Under age 25, the number is about 28 percent. In all, the

post-baby-boom generations are more than three times as likely as boomers to have tattoos.

"Tattoos that are not extremist, indecent, sexist or racist are allowed on the hands and neck. Initial entry determinations will be made according to current guidance," states the revised regulation.

The Army has never allowed indecent tattoos on any part of the body, personnel officials pointed out.

The new policy allows recruits and Soldiers to sport tattoos on the neck behind an imaginary line straight down and back of the jawbone, provided the tattoos don't violate good taste.

"The only tattoos acceptable on the neck are those on the back of the neck," said Hank Minitrez, Army Human Resources Policy spokesman. "The back of the neck is defined as being just under the ear lobe and across the back of the head. Throat tattoos on that portion of the neck considered the front, [forward of the ear lobe,] are prohibited."

Soldiers considering tattoos on their hands or necks should consider asking their chain of command before being inked.

"While the Army places trust in the integrity of its Soldiers and leaders, if a Soldier has a questionable case regarding tat-

toos, he or she should seek the advice of the local commander through the chain of command," added Minitrez.

Should a Soldier not seek advice and have tattoos applied that aren't in keeping with AR-670, the command will counsel the Soldier about medical options but may not order the Soldier to have the tattoos removed. However, if a Soldier decides not to take the medical option at Army expense, the Soldier may be discharged.

The Army's new policy, however, does not mean Soldiers should rush out and have the backs of their necks or their hands entirely covered in decorative art, Minitrez said.

"The Army does not have a percentage policy for tattoos," Minitrez said. "As long as tattoos do not distract from good military order and discipline and are not extremist, racist, sexist or indecent, they're permitted."

If a Soldier's current command has no issue with his or her tattoos, personnel files should state the Soldier is in line with AR-670, officials said. Though not mandatory, having the notation serves as back-up documentation at a follow-on command which might feel the Soldier's tattoos don't meet Army regulations.

Air assault school returns to Oklahoma National Guard



Photo by Sgt. W. W. Marlow

Rappelling is one of many tasks facing Air Assault School students.

OKLAHOMA CITY - Air Assault School has returned here after 12 years, and some 240 Soldiers signed up for one of the Army's most rigorous programs.

With a washout rate as high as 50 percent, this 10-day course pushes Soldiers to their mental and physical limits.

From 1988 to 1994, the Oklahoma Army National Guard ran one of the few Air Assault Schools outside the active Army. Budget cuts and military realignments closed it. On April 6, it returned as 140 Oklahoma Army National Guardsmen and nearly 100 Soldiers from surrounding states tried to earn the Air Assault Badge.

Maj. Mike Kinnison, Oklahoma Army National Guard state project officer, said the school will fulfill three goals. "It will offer new training opportunities, specialized skills and help with retention," he said.

The course trains Soldiers in combat air assault and sling load operations and rappelling, familiarizing them with the capabilities of Army aircraft, safety procedures, rappel operations and aero-medical evacuation. Each Soldier will be able to demonstrate the skills to make maximum use of helicopters in combat to support their unit operations.

Kinnison said Zero Day -- the day before the actual course -- is hardest. "Zero Day consists of a two-mile run in boots, which must be completed in less than 18 minutes, followed by the obstacle course," he said.

Soldiers must pass a pre-requisite test and successfully complete "Zero Day" before attending the course.

The course has three phases. The first is called combat assault and is three days. Soldiers are trained on aircraft safety, aircraft orientation, aero-medical evacuation, pathfinder operations, hand and arm signals, close combat attacks and combat assault operations.

Phase Two, also three days, is sling load operations. Students get hands-on training on preparation, rigging and inspection of external slings, hooking-up a load under a CH-47 Chinook or UH-60 Blackhawk.

Phase Three, again three days, is rappelling. Students learn ground and aircraft procedures. Soldiers conduct two rappels on the wall side of a 34-foot tower, nine to 12 rappels from the open side and two from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter hovering at up to 90 feet.

The final event is the 12-mile road march. Soldiers must complete this in three hours or less to graduate.

The school is being taught by a mobile training team from the Warrior Training Center at Ft. Benning, Ga., and supported by staff of the Oklahoma National Guard's Regional Training Institute. The school will be conducted at Camp Gruber, Okla., for two years before being rotated to other states.

Upon graduation, Soldiers receive the air assault badge and additional skill identifier.

Alaska Air Guard rescues state trooper whose plane crashed



Photo by Tech. Sgt. John K. McDowell

Alaska Air National Guard pararescuemen saved a pilot's life using skills like the ones practiced in this training

By 2nd Lt. Amy Bombassaro

Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska - The Alaska Air National Guard saved a state trooper March 22 after his personal Piper Cub aircraft crashed 90 miles north of Dillingham.

The pilot, Justin Rodgers, is a trooper with the Dillingham post of the Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement.

Rodgers and his father, Charles, were flying in two separate Piper Cub planes.

Rodgers separated to land his aircraft. When his father flew to the landing site, he found the downed, burning plane and reported the accident using an emergency frequency that was picked up by the Regional Air Operations Center at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

An HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter and an HC-130 Hercules rescue tanker carrying pararescuemen dispatched from Kulis Air National Guard Base in Anchorage at about 10 p.m. After locating the site of the crash, shortly after midnight, the HH-60 Pave Hawk landed and the pararescuemen went to work.

Rodgers emerged from a snow hole he had dug away from the aircraft and signaled to the pararescuemen for help. He was suffering from severe hypothermia, a dislocated shoulder and other related injuries. The pararescue team stabilized and loaded him on the HH-60.

The pararescuemen reported that the outer layer of his clothing was burned from the crash.

"He was wearing several sets of very durable pants," an Air Guard spokesman said. "Pararescuemen assume the added layers assisted in his survival."

The ANG aircrew flew to Illiamna Airport where they transferred Rodgers to a HC-130 to accelerate flying time to Kulis. At the base, Rodgers was moved to a civilian ambulance that transported him to Providence Hospital in Anchorage.

Rodgers has been a state trooper since September 1997, and his father is a retired trooper.

National Transportation Safety Board officials are investigating the cause of the crash.

Vermont troops armor up with bulletproof glass

By Todd Pitman

Associated Press

RAMADI, Iraq -- The 21-year-old gunner was standing atop the turret of a Humvee called Frankenstein's Monster when the bomb exploded, sending shrapnel and ballbearings toward his head.

Knocked down in his vehicle, Spc. Richard Sugai regained consciousness and realized he was lucky to be alive. His savior: a glass cocoon of 2-inch thick bulletproof windshields he welded around the top of his turret three days earlier.

Troops call the modification "Pope Glass" because it brings to mind the ballistic-proof glass box the late Pope John Paul II used. The jerry-rigged protection is a signature on the turrets of Humvees across the main U.S. base in insurgent-plagued Ramadi, where troops are adding ever-more armor to protect against snipers, small-arms fire and roadside bombs. "I would have been gone if that glass hadn't been there," Sugai said. "I probably wouldn't have a head."

The Vermont National Guard's Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 172nd Armor, became the first to start using the so-called Pope Glass after one of its support soldiers, 44-year-old Spc. Scott Betit, added on his own with a colleague's help after his initial run through Ramadi late July.

"It was really uncomfortable keeping myself above the turret that first time. I felt exposed," said Betit, of Whitecreek, N.Y. "When I put the glass on, everybody was like, what the hell is this guy doing? But then they started asking for it."

It soon spread throughout Alpha Company and other units. The added glass - fashioned from three Humvee front windshields welded above the armored-steel ring around the sides of the gunner's turret - is about 18 inches high. Alpha Company commanders say the glass spared seven gunners from death or severe head trauma over six months.

Extra armor is being added on everything that moves off base, including tanks, trucks and tracked medical vehicles.

It's a far cry from the 1991 Gulf War, when troops stripped

"I love the stuff. It saves guys' lives."

-Capt. Doby Thompson, Vermont National Guard

down unarmored Humvees, removing glass from side doors to avoid glare that could reflect miles across deserts, said Capt. Doby Thompson, Alpha company's executive officer. Such thin vehicles are almost never used off-base now, derided among troops as "hillbilly armor." Today it's all about "up-armor" - adding more.

The Army has shipped thousands of M-1114 Humvees to Iraq with specially armored doors and bellies and ballistic-proof glass. Though gunner turrets on these vehicles already are surrounded by a flank of armored steel, some soldiers feel their back and sides are exposed. "Everybody going out-

side the wire should have it," said Thompson, of Danville, Vt. "I love the stuff. It saves guys' lives."

Sugai survived that bomb blast with a damaged eardrum, scratches and a pebble lodged in his eyebrow. Shrapnel shattered one of the Pope Glass panes. The ballistic glass was replaced, but the Humvee's rear is still peppered with two dozen shrapnel impacts.

Capt. Robert Beaudry, 37, of Milton, Vt., said Pope Glass had been added to about 100 Humvees. Motorpool mechanics cannibalized existing stocks. "The Army is talking about fielding a similar kit ... but that probably won't get here for a year. It doesn't help us now," Beaudry said.

Not all gunners like them. The three ballistic panes add 400 pounds onto vehicles that weigh nearly 10,000 pounds. That can make a Humvee harder to drive and more liable to roll. It hasn't been cheap, either. Each pane costs about \$2,500.

Someday, gunners may not have to expose themselves above their vehicle at all. This week, Sugai went on a patrol west of Ramadi in a so-called CROW - a Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station. From the back seat, he manned an MK-19 40mm grenade launcher mounted above, operating it via a joystick. Trash-strewn streets appeared on a color screen in front of him. A camera is attached to the gun, which spun around at his command.

"It's definitely safer inside here, but I'll sit in either one," Sugai said, comparing the CROW to his Pope Glassed Humvee. "They're both safer than what we used to have."

Utah Air Guard briefings cut safety violations

By Senior Airman Christiana T. Elieson
151st Air Refueling Wing

In the past, civilian pilots have unknowingly flown their aircraft into military airspace, putting themselves and military pilots' safety in jeopardy.

Today, however, the 299th Range Control Squadron with the Utah Air National Guard is trying to change that by going out into local communities and informing them about military airspace.

The program is the Mid-Air Collision Avoidance Program. It came into 1st Lt. Todd Lobato's hands as a fledgling program with 80 people attending five briefings around the state of Utah six years ago.

It has grown to over 500 people attending this year's nine briefings in cities around the state of Utah and in Northern Nevada.

"We used to have one to two violations per week," said Lobato, 299th aviation safety counselor. "Now it's two to three times a year -- proof these programs are working, and they're effective."

The use of the services offered by the 299th RCS has also increased.

"Because of the pilot awareness, they know how to contact us, where to contact us and the services we provide," said Tech. Sgt. Hugh Marstella, air traffic control specialist with the 299th. "They also know the traffic patterns in and around the ranges of the military aircraft."

One reason for the better participation and reception is Sept. 11.

"I've been doing these briefings prior to Sept. 11 and after Sept. 11," Lobato said. "Before, we were getting a lot of complaining about 'do we really need all this airspace?' ... You know, 'I can't get through here at certain times.' Since Sept. 11, the attitudes have completely changed. We get a lot of people saying 'thank you for what you are

doing, we understand why you are using the airspace.'"

Other reasons for the lower violation rate are the expansion of cities visited, using local experts from the Federal Aviation

Administration and nearby military installations, and getting the word out through the FAA Web site and networking the tight knit pilot community, Lobato said.

"It's an important program as far as decreas-

ing the likelihood of incidents," said Marstella. "Even if pilots don't use our services, they know where military aircraft are flying."

Minn. troops' big Camp Shelby sendoff

By Sgt. Jackqueline Herring

Mobilization Center Shelby

CAMP SHELBY, Miss.- "We issued more than 3,000 vehicle registration passes when initially we were told only 1,800 would be needed," said Maj. Robert Watras, provost marshal for Mobilization Center Shelby.

Watras was describing the magnitude of support families, friends, businesses, local and state leaders, military leaders and others gave the Minnesota Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 34th Brigade Combat Team at a March 16 farewell ceremony at Camp Shelby, Miss.

More than 5,000 attended the rain-soaked event that concluded three days of activities hosted by the 34th BCT, Minnesota businesses and citizens, First U.S. Army, Mobilization Center Shelby and other organizations.

The farewell event featured several key Minnesota and military leaders who praised the 34th BCT for completing the tough theater immersion training and preparing to deploy to

fight the war on terrorism.

"It takes hard work. It takes people who are willing to walk the walk," stated Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. "The real heroes are the men and women who serve in the United States Army."



Army News Service photo

More than 4,000 troops of the 1st Battalion, 34th Brigade Combat Team assemble in special formation during a farewell ceremony at Camp Shelby, Miss., March 16.

The first day's activities included a formation and aerial photo of the famed "Red Bull" unit crest, a USO concert, a performance by the 313th Army Reserve band and local blues and country singers.

On the second day, Stockyard Meats of Minnesota and more than 65 volunteer leaders who call themselves the "Serve Our Troops" group grilled nearly 8,000 steaks for the troops and their families.

The 34th BCT was mobilized at Mobilization Center Shelby in the fall of 2005.

"They're well prepared, they're well equipped and ready to go," Lt. Gen. Russell Honoré, commanding general of the First Army, told family members.

The 34th BCT will deploy immediately from Camp Shelby and serve a one-year tour in Iraq.

Florida's newest Soldiers get a taste of Basic

By Spc. Andrew Hillegass

107th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP BLANDING JOINT TRAINING CENTER, Fla. - The Soldier can barely stand, chest heaving. He wipes sweat and dirt from his brow. He embraces his buddy to thank him for the support, and then they both find shade to collapse and get some rest.

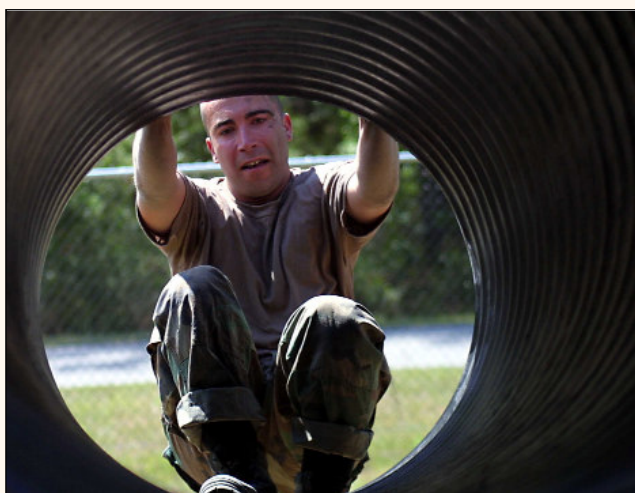
For Mike Goeke, a 30-year-old new recruit, the challenge is just beginning; he will be shipping off to basic combat training in less than a month. He knows the obstacles that lie ahead will be tougher, but thanks to the 164th Air Defense Brigade's Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) Goeke will leave better prepared than when he signed up.

"I love it; I am less nervous now because of the training that the RSP has put me through," Goeke said.

At four stations throughout Camp Blandings Joint Training Center, recruits learned tasks including engagement skills training, a confidence course, initial entry training task instruction, and drill and ceremony.

"We try to teach them as many things they are going to have to know when they go through basic, so they can be as successful as possible and have the confidence to excel," said Capt. Shane McKay, the officer-in-charge of the sustainment program for the 164th. "We go over simple things like chain-of-command, rank structure, who to salute, and the Soldier's Creed. We make sure that before they leave (for basic training) the new Soldiers are physically fit, mentally prepared and administratively sound."

The new Soldiers were learning lessons all day, even if they were not taught in a classroom environment, the captain said.



Florida National Guard photo

A Soldier faces another obstacle at the 164th Air Defense Brigade's Recruit Sustainment Program.

"I watched a Soldier motivate his buddy with everything he had - pulling him and dragging him all over the confidence course," McKay said. "It was really amazing to see those two transform into a team and help one another to complete the course in such a short period of time."

This field training exercise was the first time most of the recruits had been around one another. The program allows new recruits to experience what basic training will be like as well as keep Soldiers who are waiting to go to advanced individual training in shape for their schools.

"I was happy I had the chance to do something like this prior to shipping off to basic," said Pvt. Kyle Winningham.

"Basic was pretty much the same, only the obstacles were bigger."

Even after a long day of hard Army training, the new warriors remained upbeat about their choice to join the Florida National Guard.

"I am glad that they have something like this for new Soldiers to go through," said Kevin Goodwin, a new Soldier for the 1st Battalion, 265th Air Defense Regiment. "I really had fun."

Even veteran Soldiers from the brigade were excited to see the recruits tackle the training events with such enthusiasm.

"In my 14 years in the National Guard, I have never seen anything like this before," said Sgt. 1st Class Jose Hernandez, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 164th RSP. "This is the kind of training that will get new recruits excited about being a part of the Guard. It will turn them into our greatest assets, because they will tell their friends about all the great things they did over the weekend and that will get others interested in the Guard."

The program even helped potential Soldiers finalize their decision to join: Carla Vidal spent the weekend giving the National Guard a try. "My sister-in-law is in the Guard, and I always thought about doing it, but now that I have been able to see what the training is like, I am definitely going to sign up when I get home," she said.

The weekend's events helped the National Guard's newest warrior receive a firsthand glimpse of esprit de corps. "It just feels nice to know that no matter what is going on, or where you are, there are people on the left and right that are going through the same things you are," said Goodwin.

In Texas, a father and son sacrifice for service

By Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

Texas National Guard Public Affairs

CAMP MABRY, Texas - With the pending deployment of Texas Army National Guard aviators, one pilot exemplifies what many Citizen-Soldiers face when they get ready to deploy - with an extra twist.

Chief Warrant Officer Matthew J. Smith -- deployed to El Salvador, 1998; Bosnia, 2000; Bosnia, 2003; now scheduled to deploy to Iraq with the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade -- is no novice to prolonged absences.

But it's his father, who is also his employer, who is the unsung patriot.

Ronald R. Smith Sr., chief executive officer of Biometric Access Company in Round Rock, Texas, is saying goodbye for the fourth time to a valued employee -- his son.

And the son is not the only employee who is a Guardsman. Mr. Smith welcomed another member of the Texas National Guard into the company knowing full well this individual might also deploy.

Mr. Smith's situation, of course, is not unique. Every employer faces the possibility of a key member deploying for a year or more. Nevertheless, Mr. Smith has supported his son not for just one deployment but for four.

The younger Smith was following in his dad's footsteps: "It was his influence and the positive things he said about his service that got me in the service," Chief Smith said.

Mr. Smith was a Navy gunner and avionics technician, so originally the younger Smith joined the Navy. When it became apparent

that moving from the back to the front seat of an aircraft would not be so easy, he spoke to a Texas National Guard recruiter. He was commissioned and seven months later went off to flight school.

"Right now we [the company] are the biggest we have ever been, but that has happened in the last 12 months, while this entire past year I have been on orders for Operation Iraqi Freedom," Chief Smith said. "My position in the company is a critical job, and for me to walk away during this growth period

"I lose two-fold. I lose my son, and I lose a very valuable employee. ... But I have supported Matt since the day he started. ... I support my son, the Soldier."

—Ronald R. Smith Sr., CEO, Biometric Access Company

was very difficult. I was one of five people that were there when the company started."

Chief Smith explained that, in 1998 when he deployed, "It took away one-fourth of my [father's] work force -- literally 25 percent of his employees -- but he told me to go ahead. Now when I walk into his office and say the Guard just called, this being the fourth time around, he says, 'Where are you going now?'"

When asked how he felt about his family's support, he answered: "It is a lot more difficult for the people who are left at home. I know what I am doing day-to-day, but until I have an opportunity to convey that informa-

tion to the folks at home, they have to wonder and worry until I get in touch with them."

His father, he said, summed it up best. "I lose two-fold. I lose my son, and I lose a very valuable employee. It is not something I can escape from at work, because when I go home I worry about you as a son, and when I am at work I miss you in your ability as an employee. I cannot even escape it from one environment to another. It is there 24/seven."

The son added, "What makes it even more difficult is I work so close with my dad, and

gle fingerprint imager that can be used anywhere a retailer wants to provide a customer with the capability to come in and shop, identify themselves and pay for merchandise without having to provide any other form of identification or payment.

"Matt was one of five people who was there when we started the company, and he is my right hand guy," Mr. Smith said. "Back then he and others were jacks-of-all-trades."

"It is difficult," he continued. "When the Soldier works for a company with thousands of employees, it is easier for the employer. However, in smaller companies, integral parts of the company are away. In Matt's case, other people are doing his job, the other unsung patriots."

Mr. Smith noted that the upcoming deployment is particularly lengthy. "The deployment is only part of it," he added. "He has been fighting fires and floods, and so he has been on duty for a long time. I was in the military and I understand, but it was different then. Active duty would take care of matters overseas, and the Guard and Reserves would handle internal needs, like the fires and floods Matt has been battling."

"But I have supported Matt since the day he started, although it has cost him pay raises and possible positions in the company. People sometimes accuse others of not supporting the troops when we have a differing opinion on the mission. I am an example of how that is nonsense. I support my son, the Soldier."

Biometric Access Company produces a sin-

Ohio National Guard gives villagers



Capt. Robert Strickland, an Ohio Army National Guard nurse, asks a young boy from the Honduran village of Aldea Orotinos to open up and say "AHHH!" during a March 27 medical readiness training exercise.

ALDEA OROTINOS, Honduras - Ohio Army National Guard Soldiers brought medical care to more than 180 poverty-stricken villagers as part of a March exercise.

Ohio National Guard doctors, dentists and medics set up shop at a primary school in the tiny Honduran village of Aldea Orotinos for a medical readiness training exercise.

The primary focus was to give Soldiers a joint environment training opportunity, said Lt. Col. Stanley Jones, medical detachment deputy commander.

"Our medics and doctors are able to cross train," Jones said. "Medical screening and prescribing of medications are the types of things we don't really have an opportunity to do back home in a drilling status."

In addition to sharpening skills, the medical exercise enabled the Ohio National Guard to offer much-needed medical attention to this poverty-stricken neighborhood.

"This is an exceptionally poor country," Jones said. "Healthcare only exists for the very rich. We come down here with a caring attitude, providing services that their government is financially unable to. It all really helps to foster a good picture of the U.S. military."

Soldiers set up five stations at the school.

"Everyone who comes in here must first go through the preventative healthcare station," said Staff Sgt. Sharon Buchanan. At that station, Honduran Army soldiers explained the basic sanitation benefits of frequent hand-washing, using toilets instead of the outdoors and drinking purified water. Pinworms are rampant in the areas, and

Stories and photos by Spc. Benjamin Cossel
196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Capt. Sean Stiltner, an Ohio Army National Guard field surgeon, examines a young girl from the Honduran village of Aldea Orotinos during a March 27 medical readiness training exercise.



Spc. Stephen from the Ohio Army National Guard examines a young girl from the Honduran village of Aldea Orotinos during a March 27 medical readiness training exercise.

s healthcare, counterdrug message

Residents were each given deworming medication, a bottle of vitamins and a bar of soap.

After the preventative healthcare station, residents received medical screening, where medics determined the type of care needed, Buchanan said. Residents then saw a doctor, dentist or both, depending on what they needed.

Inside a makeshift clinic, doctors treated ailments ranging from infected cuts to lower back pain.

"This has been an excellent opportunity for me," said Capt. Sean Stiltner, a field surgeon. "It's really reinforcing some of the basics of medicine. You don't get to do this type of stuff back home."

Capt. Robert Strickland agreed. "Working in the operating room at Toledo Hospital (in Ohio), I mostly write the orders and my patients are asleep when I work on them," he said. "This is a much more hands-on type experience."

Once the villagers completed their medical evaluation, they were given medications prescribed by the doctors.

Then, it was on to see Maj. Mark Beicke or Col. Michael Hablitzel, the dentists.

Hablitzel was impressed that most patients maintained fairly good oral hygiene. "For many people that have come through today, we actually haven't pulled too many teeth," he said.

In private practice since 1983, Hablitzel said working under the shade of a large cypress tree was different from the well-lit, sterile environments of his home office. "I would love to have a bit more light to work with," he said. "But it's actually quite relaxing."

The joint exercise included members of the Air Force and the Honduran Army.



Manie Shelton assists dentist Maj. Mark Beicke, both of the Soldiers Ohio Army National Guard Medical Detachment, extract the tooth of Protinos, Honduras, villager during a March 27 medical readiness exercise.



First Sgt. Joseph Vince of the Ohio Army National Guard Medical Detachment speaks to students March 29 at the Brassavola Bi-Lingual School in La Ceiba, Honduras.

Gangs, drugs: Familiar problems

LA CEIBA, Honduras - In his 14 years as a Franklin County (Ohio) Sheriff's Department Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) officer, Ohio Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Joseph Vince has visited plenty of schools - but he never expected to give his presentation in Central America.

Visiting the Brassavola Bi-Lingual School on March 29, in La Ceiba, Honduras, Vince, chief medical non-commissioned officer with the Ohio Army National Guard Medical Detachment, taught children in grades seven through 11 the dangers of drugs and gangs.

The idea came during a meeting of local Honduran medical officials and medical detachment members as they prepared missions in support of Operation New Horizons, Vince said.

Operation New Horizons is a joint training exercise between members of the U.S. and Honduran militaries with a side effect of bringing civil relief to citizens of the area.

"We've been working with Dr. Wilmer Almador, a local dentist, to determine what locations would benefit the most by our medical personnel setting up," Vince said. "Dr. Almador knew that I was a DARE officer and asked me if I would make my presentation at a local school."

Students from the school worked with members of the Air Force as translators. Dr. Almador thought it would be nice to give something back.

It took a few days to make all the preparations, but finally Vince was sitting in a car with school counselor David Guevara navigating the streets of La Ceiba on their way to the school.

Vince was shown to an auditorium where more than 100 seventh, eighth and ninth grade students awaited.

"This is a larger group of kids than I'm used to dealing with," he said. "Typically I make this presentation to about 30 or so children."

Vince started the presentation by asking the students where he was from in the United States. "Anyone know where Ohio is?" Then he asked the kids why people use drugs. The group of timid school children eked out a response to which Vince slightly teased

them. "Come on, you're a smart group of kids, I know you can do better than that!"

Eventually the kids became more engaged and answered Vince's questions with more excitement and vigor as he asked them about methamphetamines, cocaine and marijuana.

When asked about methamphetamines, most said they didn't know what the drug was.

"I'm very glad you don't know what meth is," Vince said. "Meth is a very, very addictive drug that we're having some problems with back in the States."

"What about gangs?" asked Vince, "What do you know about gangs?"

The notorious Mara Salvatrucha 13 -- or MS-13 -- has a presence in the area.

"In the States, gangs are also a big problem," Vince said. "Especially the MS-13, and they are every bit as vicious in the States as they are here."

Vince gave the students tips on how to stay away from drugs and reasons not to join gangs.

Ending his presentation, Vince read a poem entitled "I am meth" written by a meth addict serving prison time. Soon after her release, the author of the poem was found dead of an overdose, the needle still hanging out of her arm.

"The presentation was well received," Vince said. "It's like back in the States. The message probably got through to some and not to others. If just one child is helped by what I said, then it's all been worth it."

Later that afternoon, Vince gave the same presentation to 10th and 11th graders.

Before leaving for the afternoon, Vince visited with the school principal, Norma Castro.

"Our kids are exposed to those situations on a daily basis," Castro said. "I'm very glad you came in and gave these kids the tools to make the right decisions."

Hoping the children took something away from his presentation, Vince noted that he definitely will incorporate this new experience to his schools back home.

"I'm definitely going to be telling my students about this experience and incorporating it into my presentation. This has been a really good experience."

FROM PAGE 1

Guardian

tives from the White House; emergency planners; members of foreign governments or armed forces; and media representatives observed the Vital Guardian Exercise that was led by the National Guard Bureau and hosted by the D.C. National Guard.

But for Guard members taking part in the exercise, it wasn't about displaying equipment. It was about training.

"This is not a show," said LTG H Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "This is not a capabilities exercise. This is no-kidding training."

After the explosion, Guard members set up a joint force headquarters and established a joint task force. A National Guard civil support team rolled in. The National Guard Counterdrug Program provided live aerial reconnaissance. A National Guard chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological and high-yield explosive enhanced response force package (CERFP) was deployed to the site.

These elements were joined by others, including a National Guard reaction force, a team that can brief responders from other communities on an affected critical infrastructure, and another team that makes communication possible during a disaster.

Last September the National Guard provided the largest response to a natural disaster in the nation's history. Some 50,000 troops deployed to the southeastern United States because of Hurricane Katrina, saving 17,000 lives and evacuating tens of thousands of Americans to safety.

The Vital Guardian Exercise demonstrated that the Guard has made some significant improvements based on lessons learned from Katrina. Two examples:

The Counterdrug Program's RC-26B aircraft provide aerial photography, surveillance and reconnaissance. During Katrina, the planes had to land to download that recorded information. "We got great pictures - but you couldn't see them until the plane



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy, Maryland Army National Guard

Members of a National Guard search and extraction element search for victims of a simulated nuclear attack in a pile of rubble beside the District of Columbia National Guard Armory during the Vital Guardian Exercise on April 4.

landed," Blum said. During Vital Guardian, the same planes could provide real-time information from the air.

During Katrina, different agencies had problems communicating with each other because they were using different equipment. During Vital Guardian, that was fixed with the ACU-1000 Intelligent Interconnect System which allows someone on a cell phone to talk with someone on a police radio or on other types of seemingly incompatible equipment. People using military and civilian radios, both UHF and VHF, can communicate through the device.

"We have a seamless, coordinated response and a communications bridge," Blum said.

Meanwhile, Guard members responded to the simulated tragedy at a series of stations around the D.C. Armory.

Sgt. Robert Copeland of the Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team (CST) pulled off protective gear after entering the hot zone near the Springfield Football Stadium. Despite the chilly, early spring

breeze, the Soldier was streaked with sweat after meticulously testing for radiation in his astronaut-like suit.

"It's important, because in the event of a weapons of mass destruction attack, we'd go in and assess and identify the potential hazards," Copeland said. "It gives everybody hands-on training, and it gives insight into what we do."

Lt. Col. Jeff Hice said one benefit of Vital Guardian was that units that would work together after an actual attack got a chance to work together in training. "It's exercising all the key capabilities together," said Hice, the 34th CST's commander.

There are 55 CSTs. On standby at all times, the first members of the team can deploy to suspected weapons of mass destruction sites within 90 minutes.

Nearby, Staff Sgt. Bo Riley scraped his left cheek as he fought members of the Maryland Army Guard's 200th Military Police Company who had discovered a weapon in his car as he attempted to drive into the dis-

aster area.

"I enjoyed it," Riley said. "If I'm not putting up a little bit of a fight, it's not good enough training."

Sgt. Lester Parks led the team that searched the car, found the weapon and apprehended Riley and another suspect.

"Good training," Parks said, as he prepared to perform the exercise again. "It shows the capabilities of our Citizen-Soldiers."

Inside the disaster perimeter, an extraction team pulled survivors from a mound of rubble. The casualties were taken to a decontamination tent.

"It's good training in a different environment," said Staff Sgt. Dawn Kelley, with the West Virginia CERFP. "We're not used to this area."

A section sergeant for an engineering unit, Kelley is like the 200-plus other members of her CERFP. She volunteered for the additional training, tests and duties to be a part of this critical capability special response team. CERFPs are available to any governor who needs them. A dozen have already been

formed, and five more are being organized.

Blum watched as Kelley supervised a patient's decontamination. "When it all comes together, you have an awesome capability," Blum said.

The decontaminated patient was taken to a field hospital through an area where a National Guard reaction force was preventing enraged civilians from attacking Muslim Americans.

"Our mission is to provide response and care to multiple patients," said Lt. Col. Edythe McGoff, a triage nurse with the 167th Airlift Wing who goes above and beyond her weekend drills to serve on the West Virginia CERFP.

Different units and capabilities working together - as they would during an actual disaster - and learning from each other was the key benefit of Vital Guardian, McGoff said.

"This is something I want the American people to know: That the National Guard is ready to serve," Blum told National Guard members at the end of the exercise.

Vital Guardian: Virginia, Maryland work together before exercise



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy, Maryland Army National Guard

Soldiers with the Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team tested the environment for nuclear, biological and chemical agents during the Vital Guardian Exercise at the District of Columbia National Guard Armory on April 4.

By Spc. S. Patrick McCollum
Maryland Army National Guard

WASHINGTON - Most National Guard units train one weekend a month and two weeks a year. But some units are on duty all the time. One such unit demonstrated its

capabilities during the Vital Guardian Exercise beside the District of Columbia National Guard Armory on April 4.

The Virginia National Guard's 34th Civil Support Team, based at Fort Pickett, Va., is on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week

and is trained to help emergency responders identify and contain suspicious substances. Members work hand-in-hand with local authorities.

"We only go to incidents when we are requested," said Lt. Col. Jeff Hice, the team's commander. "We can come in there at no cost to help emergency responders."

"It can happen at any time," said Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Trask, the team's operations noncommissioned officer. "You get a local responder or incident commander that's not really comfortable with what he's got, or it may be a little suspicious or something he's not used to. He has that ability to call for further help."

The team got such a call April 1, just as it was ramping up for Vital Guardian. The team responded to Amherst, Md. Homes were evacuated after an unknown chemical lab was discovered. "Saturday afternoon we received notification (of) a request for a

civil support team to assist a hazardous material team with an unidentified substance," Hice said.

The request was called in by the Montgomery County Emergency Services Department.

"They had retrieved samples," Trask said. "We collected a few more samples and then used the mobile analytical lab to break them down and study (them) to give the officials an idea of what they had."

The Maryland Guard's 32nd Civil Support Team provided the lab, and the smooth integration of the two units exemplified how neighbors help neighbors in the National Guard, Hice said.

The Maryland civil support team is relatively new, and some members have not been certified, Hice said. Virginia provided the fully-certified personnel, and Maryland provided the lab. "My mobile laboratory was working another event in the southern part of Virginia," said Hice. "I couldn't pull my support from my incident commander in southern Virginia. So the Maryland team was able to give me that asset I lacked. One thing the teams have to do is work together. You cannot keep 22 people up and ready to go 100 percent of the time. Yet there's a need to cover down on situations all the time. So the big thing the teams work on a lot is supporting each other."

Guard members identified the substance as elements of a "date rape" drug, a narcotic, and residents returned to their homes.

Vital Guardian: Counterdrug people covered exercise from on high

By Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON - Thirty National Guard Counterdrug Program Soldiers and Airmen from nine states came to the nation's capital during the first week in April to support the Vital Guardian Exercise, the Guard's first critical capabilities exercise, held at the District of Columbia National Guard Armory.

Air Guard Tech. Sgt. Brent and Army Guard Chief Warrant Officer Dave, like some others, were here for the first time and were looking forward to experiencing all of the history the area offers. First, however, they participated in a major training exercise to test the Guard's ability to respond to a devastating event such as a terrorist attack with a weapon of mass destruction.

"We are here performing a realistic mission, doing exactly what we would do if something catastrophic like that were to happen," said Dave, a pilot in the National Guard.

The full-time counterdrug Soldiers and Airmen came from the District of Columbia, Georgia, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington state and Wisconsin.

The Counterdrug Program falls under the Guard's Domestic Operations Division, which led the exercise. Brent's pivotal role in the exercise was to ensure the data downlink system was operational.

Both the Security and Support Battalion's OH-58 helicopters and the RC-26B fixed-wing airplane provided real-time aerial observation of the affected area with thermal imaging Forward Looking Infrared cameras. Video imaging of the site was down-linked to the incident commander to provide situational awareness. High resolution digital photos and video were later provided from the airplane.

"Basically, I am an image collector and disseminator," said Brent. "We can have this equipment operational before the aircraft is even up in the air."

The counterdrug people worked with Virginia's 34th Civil Support Team, and the day's exercise went well, Brent said. The other participants agreed, especially Air Guard Lt. Col. Colleen Chipper, Virginia's Counterdrug Program coordinator and the counterdrug team leader for the exercise.

"We were able to successfully exercise the interoperability between counterdrug folks working with the civil support team and joint task force," Chipper said. "We learned how we can better support some of the other domestic operation's assets available in the states."

Total support provided by the counterdrug programs included three helicopters, two RC-26B planes and one Light Armored Vehicle (LAV). The LAV is an eight-wheeled vehicle used to drive emergency responders into the affected areas. It can also be used to communicate with law enforcement agencies. Other counterdrug personnel assumed the roles of protesters and victims during the exercise.

A counterdrug display from National Guard Bureau as well as D.C.'s Drug Demand Reduction Program and the digital mapping personnel were on exhibit during the training exercise.

"It was a great experience to see the states come together," said Chipper. "We were able to respond relatively quickly and become seamless."

"This was a once in a lifetime training opportunity," agreed Dave.

Because of the nature of their missions, the National Guard does not release full names and duty locations of some counterdrug personnel to safeguard them and their families.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Cheryl Hackley, National Guard Bureau

A National Guard Counterdrug Program OH-58 Kiowa helicopter provides aerial surveillance during the Vital Guard Exercise at the District of Columbia National Guard Armory on April 4.

Contacting a Family Program Coordinator near you

The National Guard Family Program office in each state joint force headquarters (JFHQ) is designed to assist family members of all service members, regardless of the military organization or status, with information and/or referrals. Following is a list of Family Program offices in the 54 states and territories followed by Wing Family Program Coordinators.

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History: Guard protected border before WW I

By John Listman

National Guard Bureau

The morning air was chilly as the troopers started their patrol. By afternoon it would be well into the 90s under a broiling sun. About noon they found fresh tracks leading inland from the border. The tired men perked up as the chase began. But after several hours of pursuit, the trail led them only to some poor farmers looking for work. The troopers' hopes for action were again dashed, causing disappointment as they made camp under a night sky. This day ended, as had so many others, as another long boring patrol. When their leader, Capt. John A. Cutchins, sat down to make a journal entry, he wondered if future patrols would "prove as fruitless."

But they would not be fruitless. These men, Guardsmen from Troop D, 1st Squadron, Virginia Cavalry, and thousands of other Guardsmen like them were performing an important job - securing America's Mexican border. The theme may seem familiar, but these Soldiers were not looking to stop illegal immigrants. Their mission was to prevent bandit raiders from crossing the border, attacking American towns and farms, stealing cattle and killing citizens.

The year was 1916. Europe was in the second year of World War I. America had remained neutral. But the country was threatened by troubles from its southern neighbor.

Mexico was in turmoil. Rival leaders, each with their own armies, jockeyed for control of the government. One of these, known as Francisco "Pancho" Villa, briefly became president of Mexico before being overthrown in a coup. Angry that the American government was aiding his enemy, Villa sought to draw the U.S. into the Mexican conflict.

Villa's band struck on the night of March 9, 1916. It attacked elements of the U.S. 13th Cavalry stationed at Fort Furlong near Columbus, N.M. After killing 14 Soldiers, the bandits moved into Columbus. They looted and burned portions of the town, killing 10 civilians. They then fled back across the border into Mexico.

Within days President Woodrow Wilson ordered Brig. Gen. John Pershing to lead a "Punitive Expedition" into Mexico with the intent of either killing or capturing Villa and his band. Commanding about 10,000 men, Pershing set out on what proved to be a futile and frustrating campaign that lasted nine months but failed to eliminate Villa.

To protect the border while the Army was in Mexico, Wilson ordered the mobilization of National Guardsmen from Texas, New Mexico and Arizona on May 9, 1916, to patrol their borders with Mexico. But raids continued, though not by Villa's band, and several more Americans

were killed.

Finally, bowing to the public outcry for more decisive action, on June 18 the president called what would eventually total 158,664 Guardsmen to active duty. Almost all would see service along the border, from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, Calif.

Given the vast expanses to be patrolled, all of the Guards' cavalry units and most of its infantry and field artillery regiments and battalions were mobilized, along with engineer, medical and signal units. What did not get called up were primarily coastal artillery units.

Equipment shortages plagued most units, but as time passed these shortages were corrected. Most units - even cavalry and field artillery organizations - had severe shortages of horses and mules. The Army sent purchasing agents across the nation to buy thousands of mounts, all of which had to be shipped to the border.

Wilson ordered the mobilization of National Guardsmen from Texas, New Mexico and Arizona on May 9, 1916, to patrol their borders with Mexico.

Those units called up quickly reported to mobilization stations hastily erected in their state capitals due to the easy access to the major rail lines required for moving troops to the border. After a stay of a few days, the units boarded trains that would take them south to the border.

Several large camps were located near major cities like Brownsville, allowing up to 10,000 troops to be quartered, while smaller camps, housing fewer men, were located near towns between the major sites. The goal was to establish patrol areas along the 2,000 miles of border with Mexico.

The Army scrambled to have local contractors construct the camps and their support facilities, including piping in water plus running electrical and telephone lines. Units with animals needed to quickly construct corrals and blacksmith facilities. Other contractors were hired to install mess facilities including stoves, ovens and ice boxes.

The Soldiers lived in six- to eight-man squad tents. At night, to seek some relief from the heat, the side flaps were rolled up, with the men protected by mosquito netting. As winter approached, the tents were upgraded with the addition of wooden sides and plank floors.

Almost immediately some



South Dakota National Guard Museum

Members of the 4th South Dakota Infantry undergoing an "in ranks" inspection while serving in Texas.

troops, especially cavalry, started patrolling along the border looking for evidence of any movement of large groups of men or horses. Infantry units conducted foot patrols, often over broken and rough terrain. All patrols stayed out for several days to a week and bivouacked in the field at night. Mules carried their supplies. The units performed patrol duty by rotations. Every set number of days, depending on the size of the patrol area, a new force would set out, following behind the first, so that a U.S. presence was seen frequently covering the region.

Since the Guardsmen were mobilized as militia under the Constitution, they were legally restricted to "repelling invasion." Therefore, following guidance from President Wilson, they were forbidden to cross the border for any reason. Obeying their orders, no Guard unit "officially" crossed the border, although there are numerous accounts of men crossing over for just a few minutes so they could claim they served in Mexico.

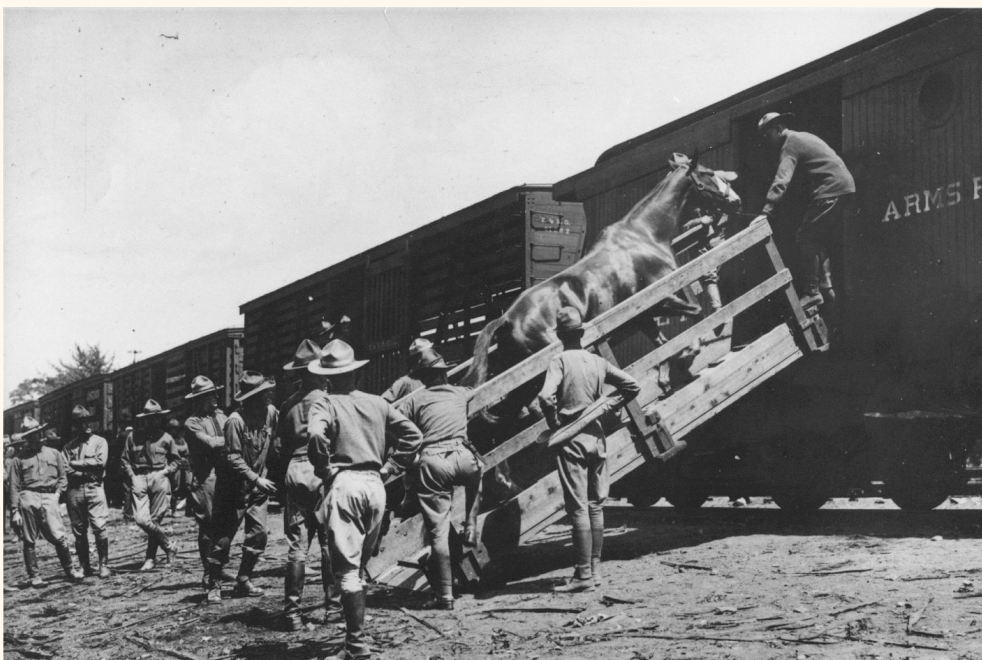
Soon after they arrived at their border stations, the units were organized into provisional brigades and divisions. All of these organizations were temporary and ceased to exist when the units returned home.

America was still neutral in the war in Europe, but many of the men soon realized that much of their training was being focused on probable involvement "over there." Some exercises had them attacking or defending trenches like those they saw in movies about combat in France. All troops were given live fire rifle practice. Field artillery batteries, often limited in the number of live rounds available during annual training, found a dramatic increase in ammunition when they conducted firing at specially designated artillery ranges such as the one established at Leon Springs, Texas, near San Antonio. It was apparent to all that they were being prepared for war.

By October, relations with Mexico had improved and some Guard units began going home. However, other units remained in their border stations until March 1917. Units that had returned home in early 1917 were retained on active duty because it was evident that America was about to enter World War I. Even before Congress declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917, Guardsmen already on active duty were deployed to secure rail and shipyards, bridges and power plants against possible sabotage.

Those Guardsmen entering active duty for World War I who had just served on the border brought with them valuable skills. The hardships of patrols in a hostile environment and the close bonds of comradeship that came from the shared experiences filled these men with a pride and confidence that would help to carry them through the rigors of the trenches of France.

Their time on the border was not "fruitless" at all.



National Archives and Records Administration

Rhode Island cavalymen load their horses aboard a train in preparation for their deployment to the Mexican border in 1916.

Guarding America

ARKANSAS: Nine days after receiving orders for a federal deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 30 Soldiers from the Arkansas National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion were called up for a state-side mission. After a tornado ravaged the city of Marmaduke on April 2, the troops helped with debris clearing, security and search and rescue. The battalion received orders for a July mobilization on March 24.

MAINE: About 129 Soldiers in the Maine Army National Guard's 152nd Maintenance Company returned to Fort Dix, N.J., after a 12-month Iraq tour. The company's primary mission was security and force protection operations for Camp Liberty. That critical task ensured the safety of 14,000 Iraqi nationals, coalition forces and civilians at the camp northeast of Baghdad International Airport. The company was expected to return to Maine after completing redeployment activities at Fort Dix. The company is based in Augusta and has a detachment in Bangor.

MICHIGAN: A combined Michigan Army and Air National Guard contingent in early April functioned as a joint task force headquarters for several hundred Guard members during a disaster training exercise in Washington. The scenario was based on an improvised nuclear device at a stadium.

MISSISSIPPI: About 300 members of the Mississippi Army Guard's 1st Battalion, 114th Field Artillery, based in Greenwood, returned from a one-year tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The Magnolia Soldiers provided security for Camp Eggers, home to Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. They also provided security for visits by the president, vice president, secretary of defense, military officials and Congressional delegations.

MISSOURI: Nearly 600 new Missouri National Guard Soldiers gathered at Fort Leonard Wood in late March for the Recruit Sustainment Program's Commander's Cup. The Missouri Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program was implemented in September 2004 and is divided into eight regions. The RSP Soldiers gather three times a year for a series of challenges between regional teams. The program helps recruits learn the skills to succeed in basic and advanced individual training.

NEVADA: Col. Frank Gonzales, deputy commander of the Nevada Army National Guard, becomes the commander in June. Gonzales will also attain the rank of brigadier general as successor to the current Army Guard commander, Brig. Gen. Randall Sayre, who is retiring.

PENNSYLVANIA: The Pennsylvania Air National Guard said goodbye to one of its oldest and dearest friends April 3. The Middletown-based 193rd Special Operations Wing bid farewell to its last remaining EC-130 E model Commando Solo airplane, closing an historic chapter on an aircraft which had operated out of the Susquehanna Valley since 1977. The aircraft was a workhorse through decades of U.S. combat and humanitarian missions, including: Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Allied Force, Joint Guard, Southern Watch, Sea Signal, Uphold Democracy, Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Just Cause and Urgent Fury.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The 43rd Civil Support Team from West Columbia conducted an anti-terrorism exercise in Myrtle Beach with its Pennsylvania counterpart. It involved decontamination and emergency response scenarios requiring the teams to react quickly and work together. The 43rd

CST is a 22-person unit drawn from the Army and Air National Guard and is South Carolina's only full-time Active Guard and Reserve unit.

SOUTH DAKOTA:

Kristen S. Tvinnereim was selected as the first female sergeant major in the history of the South Dakota Army National Guard. "It is truly an unexpected honor and a tremendous opportunity," she said. "In 1977 I was hired onto the full-time force of the South Dakota Guard as an administrative supply technician. I was told then that I was the first female in the nation to receive that opportunity." Tvinnereim was promoted to the highest enlisted pay grade after being chosen as the chief of personnel services for the state Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City.

UTAH: The Utah Air National Guard received the last of its KC-135R Stratotanker air-to-air refueling planes as part of the conversion from the E to the R models. The aircraft are expected to be online this summer.

WISCONSIN: More than 400 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery received

mobilization orders. Headquartered in Milwaukee with subordinate units in three other communities, the battalion's Soldiers were scheduled to report for active duty at their unit armories April 19. The battalion's mobilization order is for about 18 months. The Soldiers will serve overseas following several months of processing and training in Mississippi. The mobilization will bring the number of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen on active duty to more than 2,500.

WYOMING:

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing hosts the annual Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems training for the

Forest Service in May.

The event provides MAFFS qualification and recurrent standardization training for military aircrews and ground personnel. The Air Guard's 145th Airlift Wing from Charlotte, N.C., and 146th Airlift Wing from Port Hueneme, Calif., and the Air Force Reserve's 302nd Airlift Wing from Colorado Springs, Colo., will also participate.

FROM PAGE 3

Parade

There were so many VIPs. The 69th starts the parade, and it had better be on time. A former battalion commander once quipped: "This parade is the 69th's ARTEP," referring to the Army's old Training and Evaluation Program that was often the culmination of annual training. Everyone in the battalion's chain of command, from the adjutant general (and some years, the governor) on down was watching.

I haven't seen a parade start late yet, although we came close one year when gay and lesbian protesters blocked the path to the start line and we had to detour around the block to get there.

Then it's up Fifth Avenue as thousands cheer.

One of my favorite traditions comes at the end of the parade. Imagine several hundred Soldiers and veterans crowded onto a subway platform, waiting for the train. Most years, the Soldiers are carrying unloaded rifles as well as the assorted drums, tubas and trombones of the bands, which are just about as lethal in such a crowded space. Even the most blasé subway patron finds this a bit intimidating. But the best part is when the special "troop train" arrives at the platform. "No civilians! Military only!" the MTA workers shout. Here is our very own express train, direct from 86th to 28th Street on the Lexington Avenue line. For any New Yorker, this is priceless!

Hundreds of friends and family members were waiting

when the battalion returned to the armory. The officers, in another tradition, assembled on the steps leading up to the main entrance and saluted the troops as they marched into the armory under the direction of their NCOs.

What followed differed from previous years. Rather than holding a formation on the drill floor, the Soldiers were seated. The colors were brought forward. Maj. Kazmierzak, representing the Black Sheep, along with a wounded Soldier from each of the battalion's companies, carried forward the campaign streamer embroidered with the single word - "Iraq."

If a single object could summarize the service and sacrifice of active duty, that was it. Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, the adjutant general of New York and former commander of the 42nd Infantry Division in Iraq, attached the streamer. It is the 24th streamer on the flag. "When you joined, you were already patriots," U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton told them. "You returned home heroes."

Unlike previous years, the medals pinned on the Soldiers in the ceremony that followed were not Army Achievement Medals and Army Commendation Medals. They were Soldier's Medals, Bronze Stars for Valor and for Service and Purple Hearts.

And unlike previous years - peacetime years - the flowers were not presented to the wife of the outgoing commander,

but to the mothers, fathers, wives and children of those who will never come home. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

This service and these traditions are part of what makes the National Guard so unique and vital an institution. It is service to community and service to nation.

The 69th's armory is located closer to Ground Zero than any other military installation in the United States. On Sept. 11, 2001, members of the battalion responded to the scene at the World Trade Center within hours and took turns pulling security at Ground Zero, at Grand Central Station, at West Point and at numerous other places in New York during the next two years. Then their country called on them to take the war to the enemy.

I don't have a drop of Irish blood in me. I'm Irish by association, as is virtually everyone else in today's 69th Infantry, a unit that reflects the demographics of the city it has always called home. But one day each year I shed my Ukrainian-German-Swiss-English-Italian heritage and tell everyone my name is "O'Melnyk." This year I say it with greater pride than ever before. What a glorious St. Patrick's Day it was.

Welcome home, Fighting 69th!

Maj. Les' Melnyk, Ph.D., is the National Guard Bureau historian. He spent 10 years in the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry and 1st Battalion, 69th Air Defense Artillery.

Guard exercise simulates attack on Midwest



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Clawson, Kansas National Guard

Capt. John Heminway, nuclear medicine science officer, 73rd Civil Support Team, Kansas National Guard, inspects a simulated contaminated soil sample in a glove box during the Vigilant Guard training exercise in March at the Kansas Regional Training Center in Salina. The Vigilant Guard scenario included survey teams bringing samples in for Heminway to analyze.

By Staff Sgt. Jeremy Clawson

Kansas National Guard

SALINA, Kan. - Terrorists aiming to inflict harm on the U.S. economy would likely attack the Midwest, not with an arsenal of bombs or hijacked airplanes, but with the smallest of weapons: bacteria and viruses. The harm these small weapons could cause is "untold billions" of dollars.

That was the scenario when leaders from 12 government agencies and National Guard leaders from Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas converged on the Kansas Regional Training Center in mid-March to participate in "Vigilant Guard," a National Guard exercise for military support to civil authorities.

Sponsored by the National Guard Bureau, the exercise is part of a series of national level training exercises for all 50 states designed to enhance the preparedness of the National Guard in performing state roles and responsibilities associated with homeland security and military support to civil authorities.

"Cooperation between states is vital in large-scale emergency situations," said Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. "That's just one of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina. Exercises like this help develop plans and systems that will be necessary if a multi-state emergency would occur here in the Midwest."

When planning a Vigilant Guard exercise, the focus is to develop a scenario tailored for the states' specific needs. In Kansas's case, the probability of terrorists bombing or crashing airplanes into buildings is less likely than an attack on agriculture.

"We selected Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) because that's probably the biggest vulnerability we have," said Col. William Vonderschmidt, chief of the Joint Staff for Joint Forces Headquarters - Kansas. "Vigilant Guard is a joint staff exercise which will focus the staff on plans and procedures

for effective command and control, problem identification and critical decisions necessary to effectively integrate state and federal assets."

Three simultaneous events occurred during Vigilant Guard. Leaders from Kansas and the other states met the first day to share information and learn about possible threats, problems and solutions. Kansas participants responded to the FAD crisis scenario while the other state participants held tabletop discussions during the next two days. On the final day, the senior leadership from all participating states held tabletop discussions concerning national and interstate decision-making processes.

The three pieces of Vigilant Guard - the command post scenario, the tabletop discussions, and the exchange of information - allowed participants and agencies to explore ways to better operate internally and among the states.

"Our primary focus is protecting the health and safety of the people we serve," said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, the adjutant general of Kansas. "If any sort of an attack like this were to occur in the Midwest, we're all going to be depending on our counterparts in neighboring states

to cooperate, share information and provide support to state and local officials in dealing with the situation."

"We can sit around and make plans, but if we don't test those plans periodically, they're just pieces of paper," Bunting continued. "This exercise will let us look at those plans, see what works, see what doesn't work and then decide how we can make things better. That's always one of our goals - to make things better than they are."

"This type of scenario will take the resources of the entire region and probably the nation collectively to get this under control as fast as possible. It is good to get together in advance and understand each state's role," said Bunting. "Because of the size of this scenario, it is better that we meet in advance so we are not starting from scratch if something like this happens."

All the states involved in the exercise are participants in the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a multi-state agreement that facilitates interstate cooperation and response in emergency and disaster situations. Kansas and other EMAC signatories sent aid to the Gulf Coast areas following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many lessons learned were shared and compared throughout the event.

The regional approach to the training provided an operational situation where Guard, Kansas Highway Patrol and Federal Emergency Management Agency leaders worked through issues side by side.

For Nebraska, the event hosted by Kansas helped provide a framework and establish common ground between states.

"This particular scenario is a good one in that it could easily be a multi-state situation," said

Col. Tom Schuurmans, chief of staff, Nebraska Army National Guard. "Probably the biggest piece simply is communication and developing a common operating picture."

This is the Vigilant Guard regional approach:

- Four regions each year conduct a Vigilant Guard or comparable exercise.
- Because there are 10 regions, each state will participate in a Vigilant Guard exercise about every three years.
- Kansas, like many states, is building a three-year plan as part of a conference coming up in June.



An officer inspects a simulated contaminated soil sample in a glove box during the Vigilant Guard training exercise in March.